

egelidus by handydandynotebook

Series: [axecution](#) [8]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Summary:

“It’s really fucked up what my dad did to you, Max. And it’s fucked up that you saw everything that you did.”

Max pauses, inhaling through her nose. Everything comes back to her in a flash. It ripples through her and stings her eyes. She blinks rapidly before the mist can gather.

“I know we talked about it before, like, the night you told my mom you knew... but can we talk about it some more?”

“Shoot your shot, shitbird.”

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Author's Note:

part 8. wtf. this has 8 parts now. didn't mean for it to get this big, but. here we are.

um, i think this prolly will not make sense if u didn't read the other parts. this 'verse isn't as cracky as easter egg prison 'verse, but it's long enough now that i'm mostly building on what came in previous entries, so i'm thinking it's prolly confusing by itself. so maybe going forward, i'll make sure to have that in the notes.

i apologize in advance if there are extra typos in this. kinda rushed cause i'm off to work soon.

edit 03-18-21, fixed some typos.

For awhile after breakfast, Max remains in the kitchen. She watches Mom clean up, clearing plates and wiping the countertops. Wonders if she realizes she's wearing the same clothes as she did yesterday, the navy top and black skirt. Max only noticed at all because Mom never, ever wears the same clothes two days in a row, even if they're clean enough. She'd always scold Max for it, too, insist she change into something different.

Max is kind of worried about her. She's been worried about her for awhile, really.

"Hey, Mom?"

"Hm?" She turns toward Max.

Max wonders if she slept at all last night. She looks tired, weary look in her eyes, crescents under them.

"You're gonna have to get a job now, right?"

"Correct." Mom sighs out, drags a tired hand through her hair.

“You don’t wanna work?”

“What? No.” She shakes her head back and forth. “Oh, no, Max. I miss having a steady job very much, in fact. It’s just...well, you know how small this town is. You told me this morning what you hear at school, even the kids are talking about, um...our house, and saying, uh, unfavorable things. I’m a tad concerned about how it might effect my job search.”

“Oh. I see what you mean but it’ll be okay, Mom. Eventually something else will happen and everyone will be talking about that instead.”

“I’m sure you’re right.” The corners of her lips twitch up gently. “Were the scones to your liking?”

“Yeah, they were pretty good.” Max bobs her head. She appreciated the simplicity of finger food as much as she had the taste.

“Good, good.” Mom turns back and rinses a rag under the faucet.

Max pushes up from her chair and scuttles off to Billy’s room for a lack of anything better to do, nudging the door open with her good shoulder.

“I swear, if you don’t start fucking knocking,” he grumbles, shooting her a brief dirty look from where he stands before the mirror.

“Ooh, what, did I almost catch you making out with your own reflection again?” Max rolls her eyes and parks her butt on his bed. Her eyes widen when she realizes what blanket she’s sitting on. “You put the eagle blanket on your bed?”

“Your mom did.”

Max crinkles her nose. “Why would she do that?”

“Cause it was already in my room, I guess,” Billy mutters, shuffling back from the mirror.

“...do you miss your dad?” she asks quietly, uneasy bubbles stirring in her belly.

"Why the fuck should I miss that piece of shit?" Billy's eyes narrow and he groans, but Max doesn't think it's directed at her. "I'm just getting used to him not being around. He's been around for as long as I remember, so, I don't know. Still feels new, I guess."

"I mean, I miss my dad sometimes and he was kind of a piece of shit too. Not as bad as yours, but still. He never calls me. He has no idea what I've been living with, he has no freaking clue what happened that day...or that night..."

Her dad has no idea Neil threw her into her dresser so hard her clavicle broke in the middle with a snapping noise that still echoes in her ears, the jagged separation between bones nauseatingly clear on the x-ray and still stark in her mind's eye. The weird bump over her collarbone has gotten slightly smaller over the days past. The bruises have faded from an ugly bluish purple to an equally ugly yellowy brown. Dad doesn't know that ever since the first time Max saw Neil beat Billy, she had feared that day, and was somehow still shocked when it actually came with almost no warning whatsoever before her hair was in his fist.

Her dad doesn't know what Neil's insides sounded like when they spilled out, what Billy's felt like when Max shoved them back, or how warm the blood was as it flecked her face when Mom whacked Billy in the head. Max had never been scared of her mother before, and even then she wasn't exactly scared Mom would turn the axe on her...it was more like being scared the part of her mind she seemed to lose wasn't going to come back, because Mom was practically out of her gourd. Bathed in blood, she shouted things that didn't make sense and took off to the basement even as Billy's bleeding glued Max's pajama bottoms to her legs.

"Heck, my dad could be dead too for all I know. It's been like, six years since I've heard anything from the guy." Her stomach tightens at the realization. She isn't sure if she loves him anymore. But she doesn't want him to be dead, doesn't like thinking about his remains in the fancy cardboard box like Neil's were.

Billy steps back from the mirror, sits on the edge of the bed without looking at her. Max notices how he seems to take care when he does, doesn't just plop like she did.

“Do your axe mouths hurt again?”

“Nah, they’re okay. How bout your collarbone?”

“It’s okay too.” Max shrugs her good shoulder. She doesn’t have a refill after this week for her pills, so she’s trying to save them for when it’s really sore. It’s much better than it was but she still ices the bruised bulge here and there. And at night, hot, piercing stabs will jolt her awake if she jerks the wrong way in her sleep. She has an appointment on Thursday. The last place she wants to spent time at is some stuffy, boring doctor’s office, but hopefully she’ll get good news.

“Your mom said you had a bad night.” He turns a bit, peering at her from the corner of his eye.

“Yeah.” Last night was one of those nights where she jerked the wrong way in the grip of a nightmare, woke up to those furious piercing stabs jolting all through her arm. “I didn’t sleep good and I had creepy dreams.”

“I’m sorry.”

Max does a double-take, squinting at Billy skeptically.

“Uh, are you sure you’re okay?” Because when does Billy apologize for anything?

Her stepbrother looks away from her but he doesn’t take the bait. “It’s really fucked up what my dad did to you, Max. And it’s fucked up that you saw everything that you did.”

Max pauses, inhaling through her nose. Everything comes back to her in a flash. It ripples through her and stings her eyes. She blinks rapidly before the mist can gather.

“I know we talked about it before, like, the night you told my mom you knew...but can we talk about it some more?”

“Shoot your shot, shitbird.”

Max huffs and scoots across the bed to sit next to him on the edge.

"After he hurt me, I was really scared Neil would come back." Max frowns. "I don't even think he meant to do exactly what he did, but I was just so scared he would come back. That he'd be mad if he heard me crying and then maybe he'd do something else that he would mean, and it'd be even worse."

Billy has his hands on his knees. He hunches forward a bit as they clench into fists and nods, eyes simmering with a mix of rage and resignation.

"I hate that I lied for him. I was so pissed off and I wanted him put away, but I was even more scared he wouldn't be. So I made up the skateboard story, and I had good reasons, I think, but it still felt gross to cover for him. Did you ever feel gross when you covered for him?"

"You have no idea how many times I covered for him."

"Wait, did you ever cover for him to me?"

"Yeah, Max." Billy nods, shrugs, seems uncomfortable. "I don't know why or who for. Maybe it wasn't even for anyone at that point, maybe I was just so used to it, it didn't matter."

"Of course it mattered." Max wiggles the fingers of her right hand, extends her elbow a bit inside the envelope of the sling. She's supposed to do that to prevent stiffness. They might clear her for more exercises at her next appointment.

"Did you ever cover for him before that night?" Billy asks, voice hard. "That was the first time Neil got physical with you, right?"

"I mean, yeah. He ignored me mostly, when we lived in California." Max hates to think that there was a time where she was almost crushed by the indifference, really. That very brief period of time after Mom first married Neil when she was excited to have a new family, at this idea she'd actually have a father again.

How fucking stupid was that. Definitely didn't last long.

"Guess I just caused too much trouble for you to be worth bothering with." Billy bears his teeth in something bitter.

“Are you still gonna do all that? I mean, Mom’ll go gray in a year if you keep up with all this Keg King shit.”

It’s not like Max always obeys the rules or does what she’s told, but her rebellions aren’t as drastic as Billy’s. Neither Mom nor Billy knows jack about the Upside Down and she keeps her nose clean, whatever that means. Neil used to grouse about Billy not knowing how to keep his nose clean and at one point Max thought that was about trimming the hairs or something, but now she’s pretty sure it was a metaphor.

“I’m here for a good time, not a long time,” Billy huffs, amused.

Max feels like punching him in the face. Settles for kicking her heel against his shin.

“Ow! The fuck’s with you?”

“That’s a really shitty thing to say to someone who saved your life!” Max snaps, feels her hackles raise up like a Halloween cat. “Do you have any idea how scary it was?”

The indignation dissolves from Billy’s features, leaves him subdued.

“I told you already, I had my fucking hand in your guts. I thought you were gonna die and Mom wouldn’t help, even after Neil was all hacked up. She was flipping her shit and yelling like your dad was about to reanimate zombie style.”

“Jesus, really?” His eyes widen.

“I told you already!”

“Not about that part, you told me about the um...the gross sheet thing.”

“Peritoneum. Specifically this omentum fold.”

“Right. That.” Billy clears his throat. “Max...I mean, it’s not that I’m not...like, it’s cool that you did that for me. But you realize how dangerous that was, right?”

Max doesn't reply, studies his face because she isn't exactly sure what he's saying.

"You're gonna make me spell it out?" Billy cocks a brow. "You're gonna make me spell it out, aren't you?"

"Wh—"

"You could've gotten hurt," he cuts her off, sharp and severe. "If your mom missed and Neil took the axe—"

"She didn't miss! Neil's dead!"

"But if she did, I don't know what he would've done. He could've turned on you. Neil could've went apeshit, chopped you up in front of her or vice-versa."

Max's stomach roils with the horrific imagery and she nearly gags as those noises echo in her ears, the chum-on-concrete sound and the repugnant, moist cracks. Her heart pumps cold slush as she imagines herself gushing lifeblood on the carpet, Neil looming above. Imagines Mom decapitated, head rolling down the hallway while her body folds like a dropped accordion.

She thinks she might throw up but Billy just keeps going.

"Or your mom, okay, what if she whacked you too?"

"My mother would never hurt me!" Max isn't sure if she should laugh or cry and she still tastes bile.

"Not on purpose," Billy says, still sharp. "But you just said yourself she was hysterical, outta her head screaming. Could've whacked you on accident."

"None of that happened," Max seethes through gritted teeth. "Mom didn't miss, Neil died, and I didn't get chopped by either of them, so why are you being like this?"

"Because I want you to be smart. That was serious shit, Max. If this ever happens again—"

"It literally cannot happen again!" Max throws her good hand skyward in frustration. "We flushed your dad down the fucking toilet!"

"I mean if something like this ever happens again," Billy corrects, exasperated, "if you find yourself in a dangerous situation, find the exit. Don't stick around. Don't do what you did again, run away or hide out, don't just throw yourself in the middle of it."

"You don't even remember it, so don't tell me what I should've done," she retorts.

"I don't have to remember to know what you did was stupid."

"Saving your life was stupid?" Max demands, fuming.

"Hanging out in the hall ten feet away from someone swinging an axe was stupid, yeah."

"Except I wasn't just hanging out, I repeat, I was keeping your insides inside! What was I supposed to do? Let you die?"

Billy doesn't answer. He swallows and unclenches a fist, messes with his bangs. There's something grim in his eyes that Max doesn't like one bit.

"I could never do that," she hisses. "Could you do that, Billy? Leave me bleeding?"

"It's different," he mutters, short and disgruntled.

"I don't care if you think it's different, I don't." She jerks her head in dissent, clearing her throat as it begins to thicken. "I could never leave you to die, Billy, fuck you for telling me I should. Damn it, talking was supposed to help...now I just feel like shit."

Billy stares at her for a long moment before exhaling a sigh and awkwardly patting her on the back. Max slumps against him, stares into his open closet at the pile of clothes on the floor.

"Missing a shirt?"

“No. That’s stuff I’m getting rid of.”

She peers at the pile more closely and realizes it’s all stuff she never sees Billy wear. It’s stuff Neil picked out for him. Of course it is.

“Do you want me to help you bag it up?”

“That’s not a bad idea. If I hold the bag open, you could stuff the clothes in, right?” Billy casts a brief glance at her sling and Max nods.

“Sure thing. I’ll go get a trash bag from the kitchen.” Max stands up from the bed and scurries off.

Author's Note:

i prolly should've made hic iacet a multichap fic instead of posting all these parts individually but i rly didn't realize it was going to like...be the neverending axe snafu au lmao, my bad. too late now.